

Sermon

Sarah Laughed, Jeremiah Cried

Pastor Lisa Giacomazza

Bacon Memorial Presbyterian Church

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“Oh Lord you have enticed me, and I was enticed.” Responding to God’s call sometimes leads to poor grammar. Like Jeremiah, we find ourselves using double negatives to get to the heart of the matter. We don’t respond to God’s call simply because it is exciting and intriguing and full of promise. We respond to God’s call because we cannot *not* respond.

For me, the call came when I was very young. I knew in some innate way that I “belonged” in church. I loved the way I felt when I was there, I enjoyed the music and the message. I traveled through many different faith practices but for me, always felt most comfortable here in the Presbyterian church. We all have unique stories about how our journey moved us throughout our lives. Mine was a bit unexpected when I landed in a pastoral job about 10 years before I thought I would, before I thought I could.

Living as a disciple, in service, can be most rewarding and a most challenging life. There are times when your life is literally overflowing with love and friendship and other times where you are lonely and overwhelmed. Making the decision to follow your own personal calling in faith or vocation, is an act of bravery in the end. There are times when we step out in faith and we are challenged or confronted in some way.

Jeremiah has a familiar cry, “I must shout, “Violence and destruction!” For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I

Inspired by [Feasting on the Word, Year A](#) commentary on Jeremiah 20:7-13 by Trace Haythorn.

say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones.”

And here in lies the problem. When we have been called by God to speak truth, to speak God’s word, it is beyond our power to remain silent. God’s word moves us in wild trips of misdirection and bumpy roads. It is not comfortable nor predictable.

Jeremiah cried, “Denounce him! Let us denounce him! All my close friends are watching for me to stumble.” Do you ever feel like people question your faith or your involvement with church? It isn’t mainstream anymore...and people wonder if it is worth it...they question the value, they ask you why you believe...constantly testing us, “O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous, you see the heart and the mind”. Test the righteous – the faithful.

Our messages of peace and love are not always met with understanding. Sometimes maybe we stumble and bumble in our delivery. And we, the messenger, are not always able to deliver the message as it is to be heard. Matthew 10:24 says, “A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher and the slave like the master.” I love that because it so clear to me that I learn as much from you as you do from me. We are always in a constant state of learning,,,from each other.

Moments of questioning, moments of wonder, I love to turn to our Psalm for today...especially, this part...

“But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me. With your faithful help, rescue me from sinking in the mire;” And God never fails me.

Our message last week from Genesis reflected on Sarah as she laughed when God told her she would have a child in her old age after a lifetime of infertility...and today, Jeremiah cries out in his distress. Both in the same manner, they are reaching to God in their own distress or in their bewilderment for what God has in store for them. No matter what else, we must walk bravely and we can because we know God is with us to listen to our disbelief in what is possible or our cry when it is all too much.

I will leave you with this...from Matthew 10, 34...to all you beautiful people of God, mighty warriors...Jesus said...”Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

Amen